

(Anti-)Americanisms

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Abstracts

Günter Bischof, University of New Orleans

Is There a Specific Austrian Anti-Americanism after World War II?

Austrian Anti-Americanism has operated with the same images of America since the 19th Century—“America as ‘Schlaraffenland’” vs. “America The Barbarous.” These images were recurrent in 20th Century Anti-Americanism too. In postwar Austria Hitler’s legacy of specific anti-modernist images of Nazi anti-Americanism prevailed for a long time - “negro music” jazz threatening Western civilization was the most poignant. A case study of the German nationalist Right magazine “Die Aula” reveals a deep-seated cultural anti-Americanism that sometimes bordered on the hysterical. A unique German-Austrian intellectual variant of this Right anti-Americanism is their persistent historical revisionism on issues such as the “Kriegschuldfrage”—who is to blame for World War II.

The culturally pro-American “New Left” of the 1960s was less radical in Austria than elsewhere in the West and copied their political anti-Americanism from their German and American brethren. Austria’s anti-Americanism generally followed Western European patterns but usually was less shrill than French or German anti-Americanism. Neutral Austria sitting between the Cold War blocs was buffeted from the worst ideological battles of the Cold War that produced anti-Americanism and anti-communism as mirror images. In the post-Cold War era Austria joined the trends of resurgent Western European anti-Americanism usually situated around hegemonic and unilateral American interventionism. President Bush as the out-of-control Texas cowboy fits neatly into older European stereotypes of violent and militaristic American “wild west” foreign policy behavior.

Timothy K Conley, Bradley University

”Ante-Americanisms: Friendly Critiques of the Emerging Nation”

Early eighteenth-century travel narratives such as those by Knight, Byrd, and Hamilton accept the terms and social manifestations of Anglo-sovereign culture: order must be imposed on marginal peoples and communities by visible representatives of a political-cultural authority. External curbs and restraints, Hamilton says, are necessary to maintain civility in conversation and to civilize the

peoples both in rural New England and along the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina. In this regard, the "anti-American" critique accepts the political relationships characteristic of monarchies, albeit with a decidedly capitalist spirit. However, when we turn to narratives written by or about Quaker authors such as John Woolman and John Bartram, the spiritual invocation of peaceable government suggests a model of political relationships different from those implicit in earlier narratives--a Quaker model of "Americanism" which is both "anti-American" and, in some respects, revolutionary. Such models typically rely on an inward discipline of will, not on external imposition of control. Such a community of disciplined individuals and mild government also forms the basis for Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's analysis of the possibilities offered in American culture. In *Letters from an American Farmer* and *Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, Crèvecoeur describes the emergence of American communities governed by benevolent pastoral authority and by an emerging discipline of a particular population. He also documents the disruption of that community by the Revolution. Crèvecoeur himself was forced to leave his family and upstate New York farm during the Revolution, was suspected by both British and American Revolutionary forces, and finally fled to France. Upon his return in 1783, he found his wife dead, his family scattered, and his estate in ruins. We might then assume that his portrait of post-Revolutionary America in the *Journey to Northern Pennsylvania and the State of New York* would be highly critical, especially of the political networks which governed the new nation. However, if we look to the model communities which Crèvecoeur had identified in the *Letters* and *Sketches* and if we review the characteristic relationships within and leadership of these communities, we find both affirmations and critiques of the emerging America from a decidedly Friendly point of view.

Paul Crumbley, Utah State University

**The "Purple Democrat":
Emily Dickinson and the Sovereignty of Democratic Consent**

In her poem "There is a flower that Bees prefer --" (Fr642), Emily Dickinson describes the preferred flower (probably a clover) as a "Purple Democrat" that contends with the common grass, is desired by butterflies, hummingbirds and insects, and "proclaimed" by the bee "In sovereign (sic) - Swerveless Tune." By describing the flower as both purple and a democrat, Dickinson metaphorically illuminates a central tension within the American system of constitutional democracy: that public consent appears, paradoxically, to confer royal sovereignty on individuals, whereas it in fact is meant to suggest the popular sovereignty of average Americans. Dickinson's play on the doubleness of "sovereignty" suggests her awareness that in practice Americans employ language consistent with political processes that are in actuality antagonistic to the egalitarian ideals upon which the democratic concept of individual sovereignty is founded. At the same time, though, Dickinson affirms that the superior status of the "Purple Democrat" is dependent on public consent and therefore transient. As a consequence, the poem holds out the possibility that this form of royalty is available to all, and that it allows for individuals to emerge from humble origins, as did the flower that received preferential treatment.

In this paper, I will argue that the fusion of democratic and elitist terms expressed in Dickinson's poem constitutes a significant Americanism that resonates throughout her writing, as well as through the literary culture of her day. Thus Emerson refers to poets as "liberating gods" ("Poet" 235), Melville writes of "genius, all over the world" standing "hand in hand" ("Hawthorne" 2723) and even Whitman details an "I" "waiting my time to be one of the supremes" ("Song" l.1050). This Americanism is significant because it acknowledges a contradictory logic active in the formation of

American identity, a logic at least partially accounted for by constitutional theory but nevertheless troubling for literary critics who question the democratic allegiances of writers like Dickinson. If time allows, the paper will also examine the ways such logical inconsistencies evident in individual writers provoke anti-Americanisms when incorporated in the discourse of national sovereignty and applied to international relations.

Thomas Fröschl, University of Vienna

Historical Dimensions of European Anti-Americanism: The 18th and 19th Centuries

Whether or not the discovery of America was a benefit to mankind or a fatal mistake with evil results was a contested question among European intellectuals in the 18th century. Taking this debate as point of departure, the discourse of America reveals the widespread Enlightenment assumption that everything in the New World tended to degenerate and was doomed to inferiority (as stated by the Count de Buffon). American intellectuals (Thomas Jefferson among them) responded to and rejected these accusations and claimed a fundamental equality of men in the Old World and the New. European unwillingness to treat American creoles as equals may be interpreted as a key element in order to understand American independence.

The American Revolution, as Leopold von Ranke has persuasively argued, reversed one of the basic principles of European politics and culture, addressing the conviction that legitimate power has to descend from above, from king or prince to the subjects. American republicanism, however, fundamentally challenged and ultimately changed this principle, insisting that legitimate power has to ascend from below and requires the consent of the governed. This was the starting point of an ideological gap, which did not narrow throughout the 19th century, and which separated American democratic republicanism from European monarchical and aristocratic ideals and traditions.

The 18th century European rejection of America as equal, the predominant European conviction of being a superior culture and civilization, shaped America's image as degenerate, crude, without manners, and lacking culture and civilization. The many variations of Anti-Americanism as differentiated from political criticism are, I shall argue, expression and result of the old and deeply rooted European perception, which tends to look at America with distrust, and which still regards Americans simply not as equals, not as educated and not as cultured, not as civilized, grown up or responsible as Europe. Therefore, Jefferson's answer to Buffon, or Mark Twain's reply to Matthew Arnold, or Harold Pinter's Anti-American arguments all can be understood as variations of the same debate – whether or not America was, still is and always will remain a failure.

Markus Heide, University of Munich

Ambivalent Vistas: Jose Martí's "Our America" (1891) and contemporary hemispheric American Studies

In his most influential essay "Nuestra América" ("Our America"), written right after the Pan-American Conference held in New York in 1891, the Cuban poet, journalist and political activist José Martí, exiled to the U.S., articulates an ambivalent perspective on "the promise of America." Praising "the America of Washington and Lincoln" that gained independence much earlier than most parts of the Americas, as "sacred" and "holy for humanity," Martí at the same time fears that the

power asymmetries between North and South America may result in a political and cultural domination (U.S. imperialism) that eventually may reproduce European colonial structures and hence contradict America's democratic promise. Thus, he partly anticipates future inter-American developments and expresses the ambivalent status of the North American democracy in Latin American cultural and political theory. Furthermore Martí's "Nuestra América" alludes to cultural and historical differences within "America." In romantic terms Martí emphasizes the importance of the pre-Columbian cultural heritage for the political emancipation as well as the aesthetic representation of the Latin American republics: "Our Greece is to be preferred to the Greece that is not ours."

Despite such distinctions between Latin America (mestizo as well as African-European) and Anglo-Saxon U.S.A., however, Martí's essay has been understood as supporting hemispheric American unity. Lately Martí has been perceived as an "anti-Columbus" and as promoter of multicultural historiography and transnational cultural studies. Even more recently, his work has been used as a framework for articulating and interrogating identity formations that cross ethnic as well as national dividing lines.

In my paper I will briefly introduce Martí's concepts of America and will then discuss his ambivalent view on the USA as well as on the ideology of "Latinamericanism." In a last part the paper will investigate the recent "Martí renaissance" in "hemispheric cultural studies" that question Eurocentric and Anglocentric notions of "America."

Louis J. Kern, Hofstra University

'The Biologic Aspects of Immigration,' 'Racial Crime,' and the Looming Threat of Cacocracy: Eugenics, Immigration Restriction, and the Reconstruction of Americanism in the 1920s

The paper will focus on the work of Nordicist popularizers Madison Grant (1865-1937) and T. Lothrop Stoddard (1883-1950) and their coordinated efforts, in conjunction with the eugenics movement, to reverse the tide of immigration flowing from Southern and Eastern Europe. Led by those loose affiliations of nativist groups associated with the Immigration Restriction League, whose unofficial spokesperson was Dr. Harry Hamilton Laughlin (1880-1943), Superintendent of the Eugenics Record Office (Cold Spring Harbor, NY) and editor of *Eugenical News*, they gained access to the federal decision makers who wrote immigration legislation. In the person of Laughlin, who was appointed "Expert Eugenics Agent" to the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization after his first testimony before the committee in April of 1920, they were able to influence the development of restrictive immigration policies. Driven by Laughlin's concern to prevent the mentally deficient and the morally depraved foreign germ plasm from contaminating genetically pure Americanism, the racist, anti-immigration movement exerted considerable influence over the shaping of the Emergency Immigration Restriction Act of 1921 and to an even greater extent over the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 (implemented in 1927). These acts were the first quota legislation to govern immigration, and were a conscious attempt to engineer a eugenically and ideologically sanitized ideal of Americanism. The paper will explore the crusade, working through modification of immigration law, to transform a feared degenerative Americanism into a prospective regenerative Americanism.

Verena Klein, University of Innsbruck

Anti-Americanisms in Contemporary Canadian Fiction

This paper shall contribute to the discussion of Americanisms by looking at Canada's highly critical attitudes towards the United States as reflected in contemporary Canadian fiction. Since its very beginnings Canada has had ambivalent feelings towards the powerful United States and Canada's history can be regarded as a long series of resistances against its influential neighbor in the South. These Canadian struggles of dissociation from the United States are clearly reflected in Canadian literature. There are three main facets of Anti-American attitudes in contemporary Canadian fiction which have struck me particularly in the course of my research: the critical attitudes towards American culture in Canadian First Nation literature, the questioning and satirizing of Hollywood and the US film industry and the portraying and ridiculing of a certain superiority US citizens frequently adopt with Canadians.

In this paper, however, I will focus mainly on the unfavorable portrait of the American film industry painted in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* and Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy*. Both novels emphasize Hollywood's superficiality and greediness for money but also tackle its scrupulous distortion of the truth for the sake of a successful movie, as is shown in *The Englishman's Boy* through the story of Shortie McAdoo. In addition, the two novels criticize the cruel treatment of actors, in particular First Nation actors and cowboys. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, for example, Portland Looking Bear, a Canadian First Nation actor, has to change his name and nose in order to suit Hollywood's stereotype of "the real Indian" and in *The Englishman's Boy* Miles, a young cowboy, dies on account of the consequences of a dangerous stunt. Finally, this paper shall highlight Thomas King's amusing way of ridiculing the stereotypical Western in *Green Grass, Running Water*.

Vincent Kling, La Salle University

American Empire: The United States and Austrian Writers of the Twentieth Century

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Protestants in the United States viewed Austria-Hungary with deep distrust and fear as a powerful, evil empire bent on undermining American values and identity through mass conversions to Roman Catholicism by clerics arriving from abroad. Starting in 1870, however, United States foreign policy obsessed on the new German Empire and disregarded Austria-Hungary. That American obsession is one basis for reading Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, the famous "Parallelaktion" reflecting America's obsession with Germany in light of the opening chapters. After the war, the earlier distrust was on the other side; initial euphoria turned to despair after the Allies, using principles espoused by Woodrow Wilson, dismembered Austria to the point of marginality. Sigmund Freud reacted with a scathing if speculative psychobiography of Wilson, while some Hungarian officials suggested (in all seriousness) that their nation become the next state of the United States. A proposed Anschluß with a twist!

A tale of two Johnnies. The notorious high-tech criminal Johann ("Jonny") Breitwieser was romanticized by the Viennese, especially in Ottakring, not only because he was a Robin-Hood-style robber of the rich who gave to the poor but even more because he applied what was admiringly called "American" know-how to his break-ins and robberies. In his novel *Karl und das zwanzigste Jahrhundert*, Rudolf Brunngraber raises this American efficiency into a narrative device; with the

ruthless impersonality of an efficiency expert, he analyzes the forces operating on his character with totally dehumanizing supra-Naturalism. (The locus of this technical know-how seems to be Philadelphia, a center of American efficiency in Austrian literature from Ferdinand Kürnberger through Brunngraber—not to overlook Vienna’s Philaelphiabrücke, named after a locomotive.) In the Jazz Age, the explosive rejection of Ernst Krenek’s opera *Johnny spielt auf* by nationalists and Fascists attests to the fascination and horror of a black American conquering the world through Dionysian power, a fear that lasted through the decades after World War II.

Heimito von Doderer wittily played with stereotypes of Americans and Europeans. Reversing the trope of the German “mad scientist” known above all from Expressionistic films, he makes the American Dwight Williams a compulsive personality in *Die Dämonen*; it seems just as possible to become trapped in a “zweite Wirklichkeit” when one is from the “healthy,” “progressive” New World as from the decadent old one. Also, the figure of Murphy in Doderer’s “Divertimento No. IV” is the quintessence of the soulless American technocrat gone mad, the engineer who wants to save the world through more machinery.

Other writers discussed will be Hermann Broch, Albert Paris Gütersloh (“Der Brief aus Amerika”), and some of the emigrants in the United States—Mimi Grossberg, Franz Werfel, Karl Zuckmayer. Finally, a concluding observation will be made about the resurgence of European distrust toward the United States after September 11, 2001, in light of the unilateral decision-making and non-consultative style of the Bush administration.

Paul Lauter, Trinity College

Is American Studies Anti-American?

When people speak of “anti-Americanism,” they are usually talking about critiques of U.S. overseas, a.k.a. “imperial,” policies. Anti-imperialist ideas grew up almost simultaneously with imperial ventures, as is illustrated by the opposition to the Mexican War by writers like Thoreau, Fuller, and James Russell Lowell, or by Mark Twain’s later anti-imperialist writings. But most Americans, including those on the Left, continued into the 1960s to believe that central doctrine of “American exceptionalism”: that the U.S., unlike European powers, did not pursue imperialist ventures, that it was, to borrow FDR’s terminology, a “good neighbor.” During the 1960s, however, anti-Vietnam war sentiment and action helped generate a broader critique of American foreign policies. Those ideas came to play increasingly powerful roles in American Studies as an academic discipline. Indeed, the lens of imperialism has provided a new look at U.S. domestic politics, not only with respect to policies toward Native Americans, but regarding such issues as domesticity. The charge against American Studies that it has become “anti-American Studies” has, therefore, to do with a wider conflict over values and power in the U.S.

Franz Mathis, University of Innsbruck

Poverty and Wealth: Reasons for Anti-Americanism in the Third World

For many years and even decades the notion has prevailed that there is a strong causal relation between the wealth in some and the poverty in many other countries. It is widely undisputed that the rich countries of the so-called first world owe their wealth to the exploitation of the third world and

that the latter - vice versa - has become and continues to be less developed because of this exploitation. With such an explanation of the unequal distribution of the world's riches in mind, it is only natural that the poor tend to hate the rich. Thus, it is no surprise that after September 11 - besides the war against terrorism - it was also demanded to do more for the elimination of poverty in third world countries, which was regarded as a prime reason for the anti-Americanism manifest in the attacks of that day.

And yet, it is to be questioned whether this view of the world's inequality is correct. Have the richer countries really developed at the cost of the poor? Is the underdevelopment of the latter really due to the positive development of the former? Or could there be other reasons for the unequal distribution of poverty and wealth? To explore this fundamental question by testing the historical experience as free from preconceived notions as possible will be the goal of the paper.

Monika Messner, University of Innsbruck

"On Behalf of a Proud, Determined, and Grateful Nation, ..." Americanism in Sports

Although largely unnoticed, President Bush's departure from the original opening lines of the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City once again illustrated how the US use sport events to spread American ideals and values. By adding the words "On behalf of a proud, determined, and grateful nation" in front of the official lines, George W. Bush used the Olympics as propaganda for the US war effort and the fight against the "axis of evil."

Apart from how sports have recently been employed to display American ideals and values, there is also a long history of using sport as a vehicle of Americanization. Early in the twentieth century, sport participation among immigrants was encouraged in order to undermine traditional ethnic values and to replace them with an Americanized way of looking at the world.

Sports have always been used by many countries - not only the USA - to display national symbols and military strength. But especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11 the role of sports as a metaphor for the ideals that helped America to recover from the attacks and launch a global war against terrorism is more prevalent than ever before. This aspect of sports as a mirror reflection of American society is also most evident in how sport spectacles such as the World Series (New York Yankees - Arizona Diamondbacks), the Super Bowl (St. Louis Rams - New England Patriots), the Olympic Games, or the NHL and NBA play offs serve as an "opiate" of the people, diverting the masses from their real problems with a dream world of glamour and excitement.

Greta Olson, University of Freiburg

Inarticulate, Violent, White, American Men

A swath of recent books with titles like *The Male Ordeal* and *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* inform us that American men find themselves to be in a state of severe crisis and suggest that being an American man is currently a contested, painful and difficult task. Robert Bly's work suggests that men (implicitly white, middle-class ones) can only find and preserve their manhood by getting away from women and fulfilling their "father hunger" in "deep male" activities. Post-war canonized American dramas often enact masculinity as gay-bashing, covertly or overtly misogynist,

consistently violent, and lily white. By examining figures ranging from Stanley Kowalski in Tennessee Williams's "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1947) and Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" (1949) to more recent characterizations of white men in plays by David Mamet, David Rabe and Sam Shepard, I want to interrogate how the inarticulate, violent, white American man has been fashioned in and questioned by dramatic enactment. I will address how figures from post-war drama affect contemporary visions of the ugly (and / or self-doubting) American man at home and abroad.

Duco van Oostrum, University of Sheffield

**The Black Athlete's Battle Royal of the 1960s:
Anti-American Protests in American Sports**

One of the only times sports stars are listened to outside the sporting arena is when they protest. When Jackie Robinson broke the colour line in 1947, he was told never to retaliate, never to speak back—the best mode of action was to beat them at their own game, "America's game," as baseball is still known. When black athletes started speaking back in the 1960s, however, the response was loud and clear: they were anti-American. Even within the context of Civil Rights, athletes were in a different ball-park, observed by the leaders as examples of African-Americans succeeding in slowly integrating America. This ended with Muhammad Ali's "I will not participate in the war," which sent a message that reverberated throughout the country. At the 1968 Olympics, Tommie Lee Smith and John Carlos's black panther salute during the playing of the national anthem was probably the most visible Black Anti-American demonstration yet.

In this paper, I would like to investigate the stories of black athletes in the Civil Rights and protest movements of the 1960s. Facing up under either the leadership of Martin Luther King or Malcolm X, the athletes often found themselves in the middle of a bloody battle, reminiscent of a racist Battle Royal. In Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), the black men entertain a white male audience in a "battle royal." Blindfolded, they pummel each other in the boxing ring until two remain. Now fully sighted, they fight until only one the winner is left standing. All participants receive their 5\$ in wages with an extra 5\$ bonus for the winner. In this boxing ring, the black men are visible as athletes, participating in a carefully demarcated area of white spectatorship. The black athletes who gather together in a hotel in Cleveland in 1967, trying to persuade Ali to reconsider his anti-American stance, leave confused. As Ali says, "I talk and they listen" (*Autobiography*, 173). Listening to the voices of Bill Russell (named athlete of the century by *Sports Illustrated*), Ali, Jim Brown, Hank Aaron, and others, I want to investigate their voices of protest as well as their commitment to America's 'games.' Within these American sports, baseball, football (the helmet kind) and basketball, is protest and change possible or managed? Does picking up the substantial fee for entertaining the spectators leave them without a dissenting voice? In a narrative of American sports, black athletes are competing in the centre.

Roman Puff, University of Vienna

"Again and Ever I Thank Heaven for the Atlantic Ocean": Anti-Americanism in Austria-Hungary during World War I

When in 1914 Europe was inundated with war, Walter Hines Page, US Ambassador in London,

reflected on the abyss that had opened between the Old World and the New, and wrote to President Wilson that „again and again I thank Heaven for the Atlantic ocean“.

Although more than three years were to pass from the moment that the USA and Austria-Hungary found themselves enemies at war, this feeling was mutual: Facing political conflicts on topics like the supply of ammunition to Britain and France by Americans, or the expulsion of Vienna's Ambassador Constantin Dumba from Washington as the consequences of his rather non-diplomatic activities, the Habsburg Monarchy showed strong anti-American reflexes. This was true for more or less all sectors of society, from the press to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is said to have detested the US for being a „crude republic“. Even in the phase of American neutrality in World War I, Austro-Hungarian anti-Americanism was so strong that it repeatedly became a political issue between Washington and Vienna.sc

The presentation will shed some light on the sentiments of Austria-Hungary towards the US in the final struggle of the empire that American diplomats thought to be „the proudest of Europe“. I will also show how politicians on both sides of the Atlantic reacted to the phenomenon. Finally, the role of anti-Americanism for World-War-I Austrian decision-makers will be considered.

Markus Rheindorf, University of Vienna

Civilization(s): Rewriting History in Interactive Media

The Civilization brand of games (I to III, with several expansions each) are among the best selling computer games ever to be produced. They are also, however, an invitation to rewrite what we are told is “the history of mankind” or at least its “greatest civilizations” but it is an experience that has several crucial catches: Just what are the “greatest” civilizations, by what standards, and by who's? The fact that the game is an exemplary 3-E title (Expand, Explore, and Exterminate) can offer a first indication as to what is meant by “great” in this context; the fact that “Americans” are listed with Greek, Roman and several other ancient civilizations and also ?begin? their existence in the game in 4000 A.D. is another. The closer one looks at the mechanics of the game and the particular inflection given to the term “civilization” by the game(s), the more troubling becomes the developing company's self-definition as an infotainment company, offering the title at lower rates to high schools for educational purposes. The paper will draw on cultural studies in general and on its theory of (ideological) articulation as a conceptual framework for semiotic analyses of the game's meaning potential and interactive choices.

Sylvia Schiefer, University of Vienna

Americanisms Under the Critical Eye of African-American Poet, Writer, Singer and Musician Gil Scott-Heron: the “Movie” Poems

Gil Scott-Heron published his first two novels, *The Vulture* and *The Nigger Factory*, as well as his first book of poetry, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*, in the early 1970s. Between 1970 and 1994 he produced 20 recordings, which were created in collaboration with composer Brian Jackson and a group of musicians called the Amnesia Express. A selection of the poetry featured on these albums was published in two collections, *So Far, So Good* in 1990, and *Now and Then* in 2000.

In this paper I will focus on the “movie” poems, which were created in 1981 and 1984 as the artist's reaction to the election and re-election of Ronald Reagan as the president of the United States. These poems offer a critical view on a wide variety of American clichés: the glitter and glamour of Hollywood, the cowboy-myth, the heroism of warfare, the demonstration of strength and unity, and the great American dream of equal chances for everyone.

Demonstrating the illusions which cover up the imperfections of American society, the “movie” poems highlight the gap between American values and American actualities. Transferring those actualities into the world of ‘B’ movies, Scott-Heron exposes the practices of American democracy, in particular the ongoing debate on freedom and equal rights. As in the year 2000 the cowboy - with a new name and face - returned to the White House, the “movie” poems have become more relevant than ever.

Christoph Schmetterer, University of Vienna

Monarchy and Republic - Austria and the United States, 19th Century

The years in the middle of the 19th century were a turbulent time for both the United States and Austria (especially concerning internal problems). Both states were not too much interested in each other, and there were generally no problems between them resulting from conflicting interests. Nevertheless there was more than one crisis between Austria and the US during that time. These resulted from fundamental ideological differences between the conservative Austrian monarchy and the democratic American republic.

The basic internal problem for Austria were the nationalistic movements, which attempted to split the multinational monarchy. In the central decades of the 19th century the Italian and Hungarian nationalisms were by far the most important and dangerous among them. The key problem for the United States was the division in a slave-holding South and a slave-free North, which resulted in the American Civil War. Generally, the USA tended to support revolutionary movements in Europe, whereas Austrian foreign policy was fundamentally opposed to such movements.

William Tate, Umbau School of Architecture

‘this is not US’: Notes on Why McDonald’s is Anti-American

This paper is an investigation into the conflict of the American identity. On the one hand there is the globalized character as epitomized by McDonalds; on the other hand lie the ideals of the Founding Fathers. Which identity is America? And to which does American society espouse? The premise of this paper is that McDonalds is anti-American, contrary to all popular belief. The author will examine the experience of fast food as reflective of current values in American society, and the analysis then asks what are the ramifications discovered. There are questions of time, quality, appearance, life, choice, and endurance. Contrasted to this study will be readings of Washington, Jefferson, and Emerson. The review of these early American thinkers will attempt to examine tangents of their thought that have been fundamental to their ideas for the American identity, with the specific tangents chosen for pertinence to the post-9.11 world. While this paper is an attempt to defuse the global myth of McDonalds as America, and while it examines the values that formed the American nation, it is also an attempt to find an identity of renewal, one that draws on the ‘ancient’,

but can meet the modern demands, criticisms, and threats placed upon the American people. The American identity is being called to metamorphosis, but we are not hearing. We continue to use outdated models that have no relevance. Or models that are superficial at best. The paper will not resolve what the new American character is to be, but it will seek out wellsprings of transformation.

Claudia Schwarz, University of Innsbruck

Spin-ning Wheel America Americanism and Anti-Americanism Constructed by the Media

As commonly argued, the media have a central role in our society, mainly because they are operating in the “public sphere” in Habermas’ terms. Therefore, it becomes vital both for the political sector (i.e. government) and the private sector (i.e. the market) to influence the media. This aim can be reached in a variety of ways, from advertisement to spin. In the realm of creating reality, the media becomes a powerful means in terms of influencing and shaping public opinion.

On this tightrope walk between objectivity and spin, between information and propaganda, between responsibility and functionality a certain picture of Americanism and Anti-Americanism is created, either by chance or intentionally. Especially when media giants are in the process of taking over the word’s media sector it can be argued that Globalization becomes Americanization.

As recent media practices have shown, especially the coverage of the 9-11 attacks and the following “War on Terrorism,” media do choose to take sides, to be patriotic. In how far Americanism and Anti-Americanism are constructed and influenced by invisible forces will be discussed. Illustrated by examples of films such as “Wag The Dog,” media’s active role in the sphere of Americanization will be dealt with.

Andreas Weissenböck, University of Vienna

Americanisms in European Car Advertisements

In this article I will explore the use of American iconography in European automobile advertisements. While the allegorical repertoire of the American Dream has long been a favorite source of inspiration in advertising, the argument is that by the 1990s the use of evocative images of American freedom and space for commercial purposes has attained the status of an international iconographic language. Commodities with no connection to the United States are frequently promoted deploying America’s national myths and symbols. Americanisms in advertising have been converted into an inventory of free-floating signifiers, free for everyone to use. I will illustrate the deconstructing logic of this development in the analysis of a TV commercial for *Audi Quattro*. The *bricolage* of this text intends to appeal to an audience socialized in a post World War II Europe replete with American ingredients.

Graduate Student Forum

Holger Benz, University of Vienna

Writing American Stories and Histories: Gore Vidal and the New Historicism

I don't give a damn what happened. What I want to know is why it happened – never could find out – stopped writing history.

Henry Adams

In one of his American chronicles, *Empire* (1987), Vidal has William Randolph Hearst conclude the novel with an aside to his antagonist, President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt: "True history is the final fiction. I thought even you knew that." Gore Vidal in fact has regarded the interchangeability of history and fiction, story and history, as a truth since 1967, the date of publication of his first American chronicle *Washington D.C.*. Meanwhile, his position is shared by the representatives of one of the most innovative and promising approaches to modern literary theory, the New Historicists. The belief they share is that literature is an historical and thus political force. And politics is the place where Gore Vidal truly feels at home, if ever there is one.

Born in 1925 Eugene Luther Vidal into a family with high political and social connections, Vidal comments on his origin in his 1993 memoir *Palimpsest*: "Before the cards that one is dealt by life are the cards that fate has dealt. One's family." For sure, fate has smiled on him and dealt him something like a royal flush. His father was a pioneer in the American aviation industry holding a cabinet under FDR's administration. His maternal grandfather was Senator Thomas P. Gore of Oklahoma, a commanding figure of Washington politics for many decades whom Vidal has largely idolized. He grew up in the company of people like Huey Long or Eleanor Roosevelt. Shortly, he learned from the inside how life in the upper echelons of society was conducted. Raised largely by his grandfather, a Democratic anti-imperialist and representative of the Old Republic, Vidal was soon appalled by the present system of US affairs in which Presidents and congressmen were bought by "corporations and gangsters".

In the course of the years, Vidal has been showing in his travels into the past that historical events happen differently according to different ruling narratives. Again and again, in his chronicles Vidal replaces the doctrine of American Exceptionalism with a representation of the United States as a settler society within the European capitalist world system. In refusing a distinction between New and Old World Imperialism, he restores to American history representations an interest-wedded powerful state apparatus that the consensus historians of the 1950s denied existence. Vidal explains the doctrine of American Exceptionalism as a cover for an "American Imperium", a ruling class comprised of dynastic families, newspaper publishers, movie moguls, multinational corporations, and International Banks. From the eighteenth through the twentieth century, American expansionism, he argues, has been a policy of imperialism more or less continuous with that of Great Britain. In all of his Chronicles, Vidal thus promotes an awareness of the contrastive usages to which different ruling classes can put historical events.

Understanding very soon that "history is what you make of it", or, to put it more theoretically, that culturally persuasive accounts of what happened in the past depend on the political consciousness *constructed* out of contemporary political and social controversies, Vidal, in his role as *écrivain exilé* has indeed come to regard his fictional history to be a historical and, by way of consequence, a political force. For the New Historicists, Vidal's fictional histories constitute both a valuable research archive as his works deconstruct the assumption viewing "Literature" as a discipline separable from "History" as well as the ruling narratives responsible of their separation. At the same

time, his chronicles represent a vast research field or "playground" since their author, in numerous instants, is of course in no way immune to his driving interests as a representative of the "upper class" when re-envisioning US history, which is, at its best, *his* history.

Gerwin Gallob, University of Klagenfurt

"traveling at the speed of thought. on the concepts and sonic fictions of the black electronic"

i'm writing on specific futurist/sci-fi tendencies in late-20th century black atlantic musics, especially jamaican dub, us-hip hop, and detroit techno. recurring to various theoreticians (paul gilroy, kodwo eshun, deleuze/guattari, erik davis, david toop, john corbett, tricia rose, et al.) i'm trying to explore the mythological worlds of afrofuturists and tricksters like lee perry, kool keith, ramm:ell:zee, drexciya, underground resistance, and others. key concepts: the aesthetics of electronic music, trickster tactics, diaspora and identity, diaspora and the post-human, misuse of technology and innovation, repetition and african rhythm, the body as a distributed brain, black sci-fi narratives and ancient mythologies, visual vs. acoustic space, rhizomatics attention conservation notice:

"afrofuturism" is a fairly recent coinage and isn't yet academically correct/legitimate over here. as far as i know, the only *proper* academic publication is this year's special issue of "social text" (ed. alondra nelson, nyc). there's a forthcoming anthology on the subject, done by british music journalist kodwoeshun for routledge. if i get the chance to participate i'll elaborate on my topic in a more profound way, of course ... some time ago, prof. tschachler strongly encouraged me to apply for this and i just found out that the deadline's today. sorry for the confused/confusing e-mail, but it's kinda late now, so i guess i better go to bed.

Alexandra Ganser, University of Vienna

Haunting Hi/Stories: Memory, Identity, and the Construction of Heritage in Ken Kesey's Last Go Round and Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony

Based on a reading of Jacques Derrida's examination of the legacies of Marxism in *Specters of Marx* (1994) and Aleida Assmann's extensive study on cultural memory, *Erinnerungsräume* (1999), I concentrate on the theoretical conceptualizations of cultural/collective memory and of heritage in two works of the Western American post-frontier literature.

In Ken Kesey's last novel *Last Go Round* (1994), haunting spirits and shadows from the past force the first-person narrator and protagonist of the novel into a confrontation with his personal

history and a critical examination of his cultural heritage(s). I argue that the notion of heritage in *Last Go Round* is presented not as a given but as a task to be accomplished, a process which always brings with it a destabilization of identity and thus necessitates a redefinition of one's sense of self.

As distinct from simply reproducing an episode from the past as official historical record, Kesey's achievement also lies in his vivid presentation of a personalized, tall-tale version of the Frontier, and thus in challenging notions of 'objective' History. As a means to unhinge official History, the importance of storytelling is also greatly emphasized in Leslie Marmon Silko's most acclaimed novel *Ceremony* (1977).

Silko, like many another Native American writer, keeps trace of the rich oral tradition that constitutes a crucial part of her heritage. However, by making these hi/stories accessible for non-Natives as well, she enters a broad historical discourse and thus can counterbalance the Colonizers' History. I claim that both Silko and her protagonist Tayo share a privileged position in this process of negotiation because of their status as 'crossbloods' – not because of their mixed blood, but because of their cultural and social positions as outcasts, as nowhere wo/men, as Other.

Susanne Mettauer, University of Innsbruck

"The Artist in the Folk Storehouse: African-American Folklore in the Writings of Langston Hughes"

The Harlem Renaissance which roughly covered the 1920s was a time of unprecedented intellectual and artistic activity by black Americans, and the main issue discussed by its proponents was that of an African American identity. On this issue, Langston Hughes, whose literary career began in this period, opposed integrationist tendencies and the "urge toward whiteness" he perceived among other black Americans. Applied to a literary aesthetic, this attitude resulted in Hughes's demand that black writers should not attempt to escape their group's distinctive culture and traditions but rather embrace them in a personal as well as artistic sense. Hughes expressed this opinion most urgently in his seminal essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926), a text that reveals itself to be programmatic for his entire career. In keeping with his literary manifesto, Hughes turned to the 'black masses' for artistic inspiration as well as literary material. Unlike many middle-class blacks of his time, he was not ashamed of lower-class folklore and modes of expression. Instead, he incorporated them in his works for all the world to see. Also, contrary to many of his fellow writers, he was not afraid of creating stereotypes of African Americans when using their folk traditions and

folk types, even though such distortions had frequently been the case with black (and white) writers of the past. Hughes however was convinced that the ways and lives of black people, especially of the lower classes, could be depicted in literature truthfully and beautifully.

The folklore genres investigated in my thesis are folk speech, the blues, and folktales. In his works (particularly his poetry, his novel *Not Without Laughter*, and the short fiction of the so-called "Simple stories"), Hughes provided numerous instances of the stylistic devices and features of black American speech; he made use of the themes, images, stanzaic patterns and antiphonal structure of the blues; and he employed the dramatic setting as well as the character types of folktales. For Hughes these folk traditions were not only the main source of inspiration, but he also clearly perceived their inherent power to help black people in the United States live their lives and determine their identity. The speech of black Americans is evidence of their creativity and cultural distinctiveness, the blues set examples of how pain and suffering can be conquered and overcome, and similar strategies of resilience and persistence are taught in folktales. By including these items of folklore in his writings, Langston Hughes tried to communicate to his audience this powerful capacity of black American folklore as well as its continuing value and vitality.

Eva Semmler, University of Vienna

Screening Lesbians: Representations of Lesbian Desire

"A lesbian is that which has been unspeakable about women."

Bertha Harris

Representations of lesbian desire in classical Hollywood cinema have been and continue to be rare. Whereas endless variations of heterosexual romance are a consistent constituent of movies, lesbian characters have mainly been presented as pathological and perverse, not seldomly committing suicide when realizing their affection for women. During the last decade, however, representations of lesbian desire have become more explicit, moving away from a pathologization to a respectful rewriting of lesbian identities. Nevertheless, most of the images of lesbian desire still work within phallogocentric definitions, forcing the (lesbian) spectator to remain alert to representations that are not respectful, but distorting, or even abusive. The entry of psychoanalysis into feminist film studies and criticism in the 1970s enabled critics to locate the source of male power and fear of women.

Drawing on a combination of psychoanalytic and postmodern queer theory, this paper seeks

to explore different representations of lesbian desire in movies such as *The Hunger* (Tony Scott, US 1973) and *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, GB 1968), in order to expose and dismantle these phallogocentric representations and definitions, and subsequently establish an alternative model of lesbian desire that rewrites desire as both constituted and enacted. I will argue that through different strategies of reformulation, especially the rewriting of the mother as a subject of desire (the mother as the Other), whose desire is self-determined and not dependent on phallic identifications, and alternative reading strategies, such as dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings, the female/lesbian spectator can achieve a pleasurable viewing experience.

I will also discuss desire in relation to narrative, drawing on theories established by Teresa de Lauretis, who showed how narrative positions the lesbian as subject of desire. Raising the awareness of the lesbian spectator's subject positionality, Rose Troche's explicitly lesbian movie *Go Fish* (US 1994) makes use of an experimental mode of film-making, combined with a reworking of the classic romance – where the quest is to find the ultimate partner.

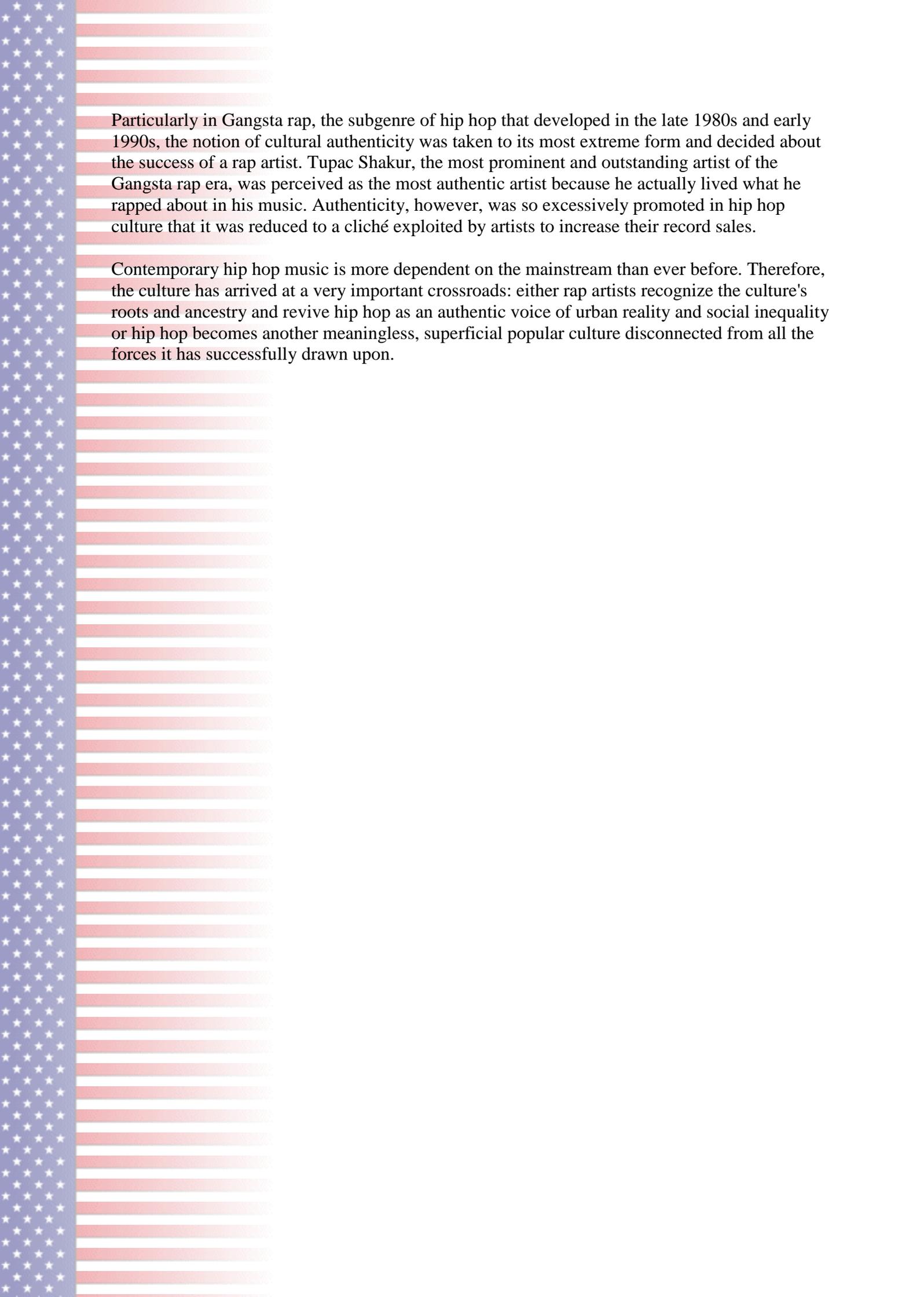
Peter Unger, University of Vienna

"I tried to keep it real, never to sell the truth, but always to tell the truth."

Cultural Authenticity and Voices of Urban Reality in the Hip Hop Community

Hip hop is a worldwide culture and can be considered the most important youth culture of the last 30 years. It emerged from a local youth phenomenon in the South Bronx to a global culture fascinating young people all over the world. The thesis examines notions of cultural authenticity and representations of urban realities in the hip hop community. Hip hop started as a subculture and developed into a mainstream popular culture. Thus, the concepts of a "subculture" and of a "popular culture" are introduced and adapted to the specific features of hip hop. Hip hop draws on the heritage of African American culture, particularly of the Black Panther Party and other black political and cultural institutions of the 1960s. In addition, hip hop culture is characterized by its urbanity. The urban terrain serves as a source of inspiration for rap artists and as a playground for hip hoppers. Particularly the South Bronx and its postindustrial conditions of the 1970s were crucial for the emergence of hip hop culture. The culture, therefore, started as a counterpart of the depressing surroundings of urban ghettos in the form of party music. The first song that gave voice to the people living in the South Bronx was the 1982 superhit "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five.

Aimed at challenging and subverting existing misconceptions of society in its early days, hip hop became the embodiment of the norm when it entered the mainstream in the 1980s. Hip hop was no longer about artistic freedom, but about achieving the highest record sales with all means available. In the age of "sell-out"-artists the notion of cultural authenticity or "keepin' it real" has emerged as an important category of hip hop culture. On a basic level authenticity in hip hop means to be "real" to one's people and to provide authentic representations of urban reality.

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Particularly in Gangsta rap, the subgenre of hip hop that developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the notion of cultural authenticity was taken to its most extreme form and decided about the success of a rap artist. Tupac Shakur, the most prominent and outstanding artist of the Gangsta rap era, was perceived as the most authentic artist because he actually lived what he rapped about in his music. Authenticity, however, was so excessively promoted in hip hop culture that it was reduced to a cliché exploited by artists to increase their record sales.

Contemporary hip hop music is more dependent on the mainstream than ever before. Therefore, the culture has arrived at a very important crossroads: either rap artists recognize the culture's roots and ancestry and revive hip hop as an authentic voice of urban reality and social inequality or hip hop becomes another meaningless, superficial popular culture disconnected from all the forces it has successfully drawn upon.